

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



J. BRENDAN SHARKEY
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

August 14, 2013

Robert A. Kotick
Chief Executive Officer
Activision Blizzard, Inc.
3100 Ocean Park Boulevard
Santa Monica, California 90405

Gabe Newell
Co-founder and Managing Director
Valve Corporation
PO BOX 1688
Bellevue, WA 98009

Strauss Zelnick
Chairman and CEO
Take-Two Interactive
622 Broadway
New York, New York 10012

Michael D. Gallagher
President and CEO
Electronic Software Association
575 7th Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Industry Representatives:

In the wake of the tragic shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, many public leaders have questioned the role and responsibility of publishers of violent video games. Representatives of the gun industry have pointed to the entertainment industry as being partially responsible.

Leaders in your industry have frequently responded with academic data indicating that extensive use of video games does not influence real-world violence. It is true that research has shown little connection between the virtual gun violence depicted in your games and the actual gun violence that claims the lives of 33 Americans every single day.

However, recent reports have revealed connections between your industry and the gun industry, which so often attacks you following mass murders carried out with its products. The industry practice of video game publishers entering into licensing, marketing or other financial arrangements to feature real guns in their games blurs the lines between fiction and reality in ways that can have tragic consequences.

Connecticut families know this danger all too well. Adam Lanza, who shot and killed 20 young school children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School, was reportedly an active player of the *Call of Duty* game. He used a rifle manufactured by Bushmaster, the same company that markets rifles that appear in *Call of Duty*, to fire 154 shots on his deadly rampage.

We have to take steps to institute meaningful change in the way we portray, and effectively market, assault weapons to children and young adults. Games designed to recreate the experience of wartime carnage and criminal violence constitute protected speech under the provisions of the First Amendment. But there is little to be said in defense of an industry-wide practice of arranging licensing deals with gun manufacturers for the rights to use the make, model and visual design specifications of their real-life weapons.

Earlier this year, Electronic Arts announced that it would no longer participate in licensing deals with gun makers, a first in what we hope will become industry standard against this reckless practice. I write to you today to request your cooperation in ending the nefarious relationship between video game makers and gun makers. I ask that you commit to not engaging in future licensing, marketing and financial arrangements with gun manufacturers. Prominent leaders in Washington and across the country have voiced support for this type of reform, and are willing to stand with you, as I do. Our communities, our country and our children are counting on your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Brendan Sharkey".

Speaker of the House J. Brendan Sharkey